

6.2.5 Sealing the Hills Advocacy Update

Responsible GM: Peter Benazic
Debbie Tyson
Author: Shae Hansen

Recommendation(s)

That Council:

- Formally acknowledge the advocacy efforts of the Cardinia Shire community
- support the Sealing the Hills petition number EN4785 that closes March 8
- publicly note the petition numbers

Attachments

Nil

Executive Summary

Formally acknowledging the advocacy efforts of our community will support our councillors to be informed when discussing the matter within the community and display a united front when having conversation with members of both state and federal government.

Background

In 2019 Council received \$150 million from the Australian Government to seal 109km of unsealed roads in our hill's communities.

The project received bipartisan support with commitments made by both the Labor and Liberal parties.

In July 2022, Council wrote to The Hon. Catherine King formally requesting confirmation that the project would continue under the newly elected Government. We did not receive a reply. Council identified that the 'Sealing the Hills' project was not detailed in the Australian Government's revised budget in October 2022.

Immediate clarification was sought about the future of funding status, and a letter was written to the Prime Minister in November 2022.

Our Mayor, councillor Tammy Radford, and David Fice, Manager of Community Infrastructure Delivery, travelled to Canberra on Monday, November 28, 2022, to meet with The Hon. Catherine Kings, Chief of Staff, to discuss the progress of this project. Councillor Jim Childs, the Mayor of Yarra Ranges, also attended this meeting.

In partnership with Yarra Rangers Council, we have made a submission to the Australian Government budget process. The Budget will be handed down in May.

In early 2023 both councils received official confirmation of the funding cuts. We have written a letter of reply to the Hon. Catherine King urging her to reconsider this decision (Attachment A) and have continued to advocate to the Australia Government to have the funding reinstated in its entirety.

The community have relied together to petition the Australian Governments, this petition will be tabled in the Australian Parliament and is asking the house to urgently reconsider any decision made by the Albanese Labor Government to discontinue funding for these imperative initiatives.

The petition can be found on the Australian Parliament website <https://www.aph.gov.au/e-petitions/petition/EN4785>

Policy Implications

Nil.

Relevance to Council Plan

2.1 We support the creation of liveable spaces and places

2.1.1 Advocate, plan for and deliver accessible community infrastructure and services that address community need.

2.1.5 Upgrade Council's road network to improve safety and connectivity while considering traffic demand and freight transport needs.

Climate Emergency Consideration

Leaving the unsealed road network in its current condition will continue to create drainage, dust and other environmental concerns.

Consultation/Communication

The 'hills' communities have been heavily consulted regarding the 'Sealing the Hills Program' and it has received overwhelming support

Financial and Resource Implications

The loss of the funds previously promised has serious financial impacts and the Councils budget

Conclusion

It is respectfully requested that our Councillors consider acknowledging the hard work of our community members who are advocating strongly to the Australia Government to have the decision to discontinue funding from the Sealing the Hills initiative reversed and they note the petition and its final numbers.